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RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 3893
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1391
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RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 9725
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RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0051
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: PERU REVIEW FOR SUSPENSION OF TITLE III OF THE LIBERTAD ACT

REF: STATE 048487

Classified By: DCM JAMES NEALON for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).
11. (U) Following is Post's response to reftel questions.

GOP EFFORTS TO PROMOTE DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN CUBA

12. (C) Peru's leadership, including President Garcia, has taken an ambivalent approach to promoting a democratic transition in Cuba, and believe the current leadership situation -- with Raul Castro formally in charge and Fidel Castro still alive, presumably influencing events in some manner from behind the scenes -- is fundamentally sensitive. Some GOP officials believe a political opening in Cuba will become more likely once Fidel dies and Raul is able to pursue policies unconcerned by his brother's potentially critical reaction. President Garcia has noted that incipient signs of a possible Cuban opening -- i.e. performance pay for public officials, cell phone access -- should be encouraged. At the same time, GOP officials emphasize that any transition process toward democracy should be led by the Cuban people and that attempts at outside actors to shape the outcome could cause a counterproductive backlash. GOP favors integrating Cuba into regional groupings such as the Summit of the Americas.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS OR ACTION CONDEMNING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

13. (C) In a series of public statements surrounding the EU-LAC Summit in May 2008, President Garcia argued that the only way for any country that has not joined the system of democratic freedoms and the world economy is to follow the path of elections, freedom of the press and freedom for those who suffer because of their political ideas or positions. Government officials told us these statements were a clear allusion to the continuing absence of freedom in Cuba.

HIGH LEVEL VISITS

14. (SBU) Peru's former Health Minister Hernan Garrido Lecca visited Cuba in late April of 2008 -- the first such

high level visit in recent memory. Tentative early plans for a follow-on visit by the Foreign Minister later, to signal a thaw in bilateral relations and to encourage signs of incipient reform under Raul Castro, have not come to fruition.

PERUVIAN INVESTMENTS IN CUBA

¶5. (U) Post has not found any reliable data on Peruvian investments in Cuba. The vast majority of Peru's limited foreign direct investment is in Mexico, Bolivia, Ecuador, Central America, and the Cayman Islands.

BILATERAL TRADE AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

¶6. (U) Under the 1980 Montevideo Treaty establishing the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), also known as ALADI, Peru and Cuba both belong to the Economic Complementation Agreement No. 50. Other member countries include: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Peru and Cuba also hold a bilateral investment agreement. Trade between the two countries is small. From January through December 2008, the approximate value of Peru's exports to Cuba totaled over USD 4.0 million. About 75 percent of Peru's exports to Cuba consisted of: polymer plates, laminates, sheets, strips, bags, cones and adhesives; books, brochures and similar printed materials; and frozen, dry, salted or briny squid and cuttlefish. Peru imports just over half a million dollars worth of products from Cuba per year, including rum, vaccines and medical products.

PERU-CUBA EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

¶7. (SBU) In 1999 the two countries signed a Basic Agreement on Technical Cooperation, but little has been implemented under this agreement due to lack of financing and prioritization. In 2008, then-Health Minister Hernan Garrido Lecca signed several agreements to formalize Cuban medical support in Peru. According to one agreement, the GOP will provide funds in exchange for Cuban doctors and medical expertise. The Minister also signed an agreement to establish ophthalmology center in Cusco. A third agreement allows a Cuban medical brigade that has helped Peruvian victims of the 2007 earthquake in Ica to remain in the country longer-term. About 40 Peruvian students study medicine and physical education in Cuba on GOC scholarships at any given time.

MCKINLEY